



**ZÜRICH  
FILM  
FESTIVAL**

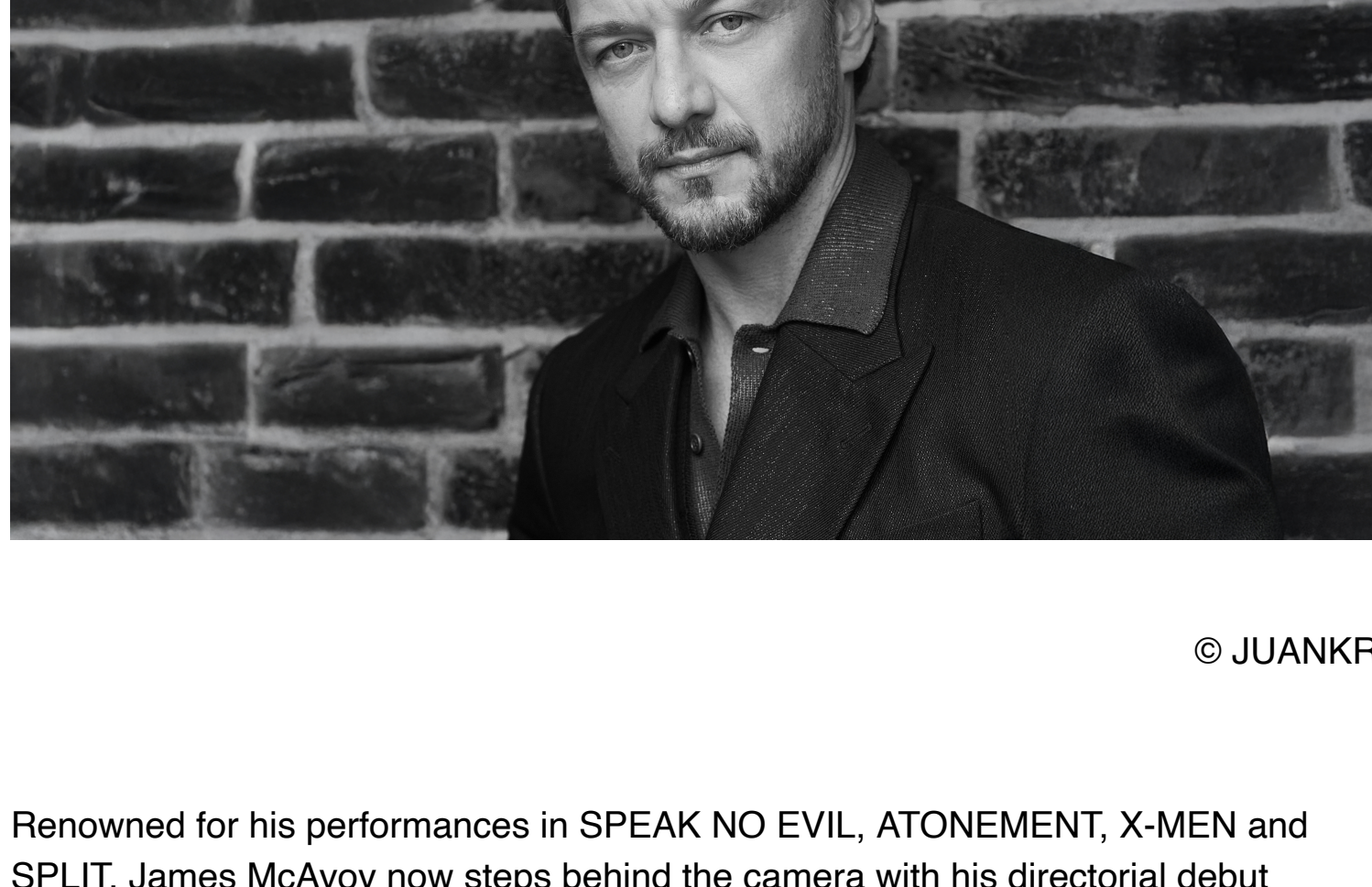
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## MEDIENMITTEILUNG

### James McAvoy attends ZFF Award Night

Zurich, August 28, 2025

In the «Sounds» section, the 21st Zürich Film Festival (ZFF) celebrates the relationship between film and music. Scottish actor and director James McAvoy will attend the festival as the special guest and headliner of the music program. At the Award Night in the Zurich Opera House, he will personally present his directorial debut CALIFORNIA SCHEMIN', as the Closing Film, which will have its European premiere. Additionally, he will be offering insights into his work at a ZFF Masters.



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Renowned for his performances in SPEAK NO EVIL, ATONEMENT, X-MEN and SPLIT, James McAvoy now steps behind the camera with his directorial debut CALIFORNIA SCHEMIN'. The film tells the extraordinary true story of the Scottish rap duo «Silbil N' Brains», who in the early 2000s reinvented themselves as a Californian hip-hop sensation in a bold bid for stardom. Armed with fabricated backstories, flawless American accents, and unrelenting ambition, they secured a record deal in London and even opened for Eminem – until the illusion could no longer hold. McAvoy brings this electrifying tale of ambition, self-deception, and musical passion to the screen, while also appearing in the film himself. On October 4, James McAvoy will be the special guest at the Festival's Award Night at the Zurich Opera House, where he will present his directorial debut in its European premiere. As the Closing Film, the screening will provide a dazzling finale to the festival and will be shown for the first time in the festive setting of the Opera House – following the awards ceremony that honors the winners of the feature film and documentary competitions.

«CALIFORNIA SCHEMIN' is a highly entertaining music film based on a true story, offering a behind-the-scenes look at the world of show business and revealing how thin the line between reality and illusion can be», says Festival Director Christian Jungen. «We are thrilled that James McAvoy has chosen to celebrate the European premiere here in Zurich, giving our audience a truly unique experience of Zurich Opera House. We look forward to welcoming him to the Festival and are confident he has a remarkable career as a director ahead of him.»

#### Sounds – Where Cinema Breathes Music

The «Sounds» section was introduced at the Zurich Film Festival in 2019 and has since been dedicated to exploring the timeless interplay between image and sound. At its core is a carefully curated selection of feature films and documentaries in which music plays a central role – whether through portraits of musicians, outstanding soundtracks, or the exploration of sound as a cinematic element. In addition to McAvoy's CALIFORNIA SCHEMIN', the «Sounds» section presents further highlights.

Momoko Seto's DANDELION'S ODYSSEY transports audiences into a wordless, visually breathtaking universe and a unique soundscape, while Swiss director Anka Schmid explores the power of singing in her world premiere MELODIE. Amy Berg's IT'S NEVER OVER, JEFF BUCKLEY pays tribute to the extraordinary talent lost far too soon, and Baz Luhrmann (MOULIN ROUGE, AUSTRALIA, THE GREAT GATSBY, ELVIS) presents the European premiere of his documentary EPIC: ELVIS PRESLEY IN CONCERT, an innovative audiovisual experience that brings the King of Rock'n'Roll back to the big screen. Meanwhile, Mona Fastvold presents THE TESTAMENT OF ANN LEE, a musical drama starring Amanda Seyfried.



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#### CALIFORNIA SCHEMIN'

##### European Premiere

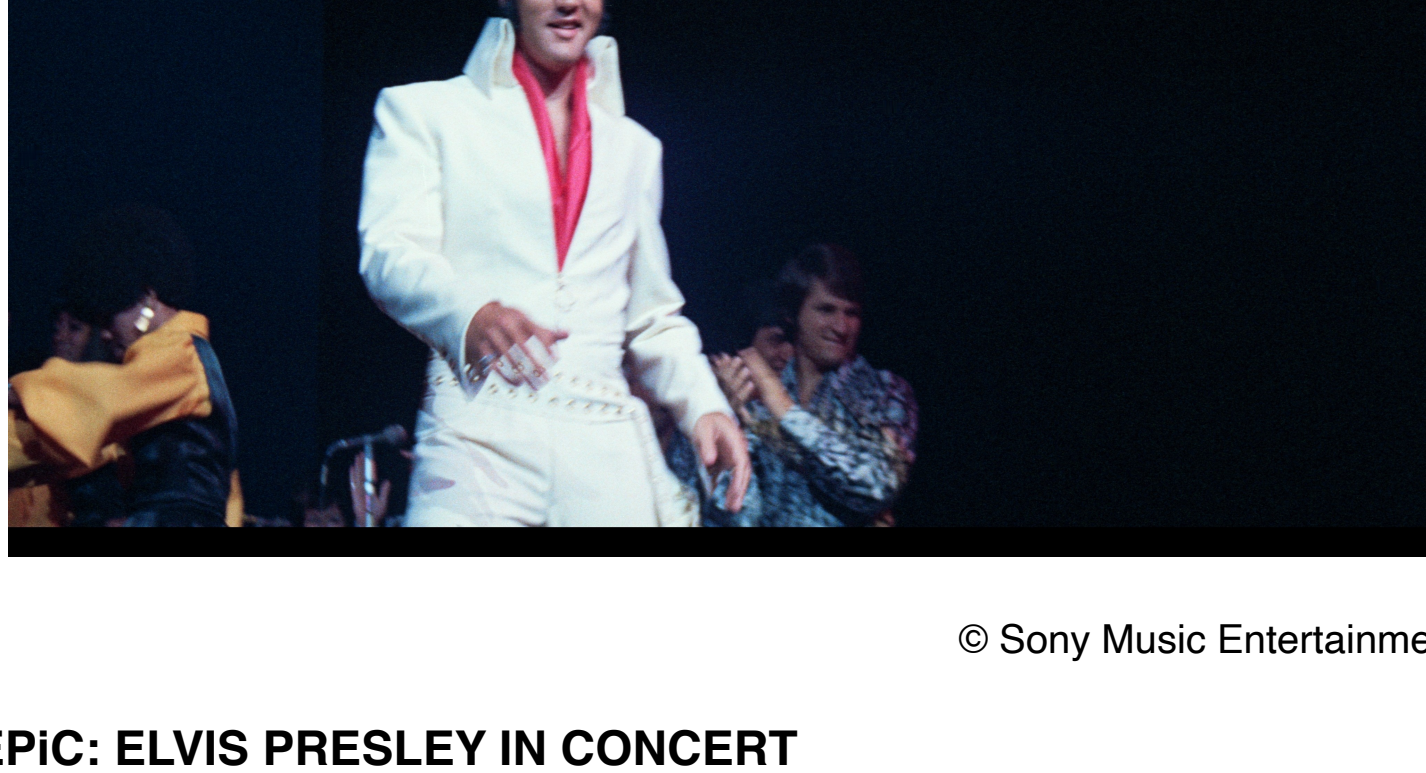
Music, Biography

USA, 2025

**Director:** James McAvoy

**Cast:** Séamus McLean Ross, Samuel Bottomley, Lucy Halliday, Rebekah Murrell, James McAvoy

Based on the improbably true story, CALIFORNIA SCHEMIN' follows two aspiring Scottish MCs who devise an audacious scheme to achieve their dream of a record deal, by posing as Californian hip hop artists. As fame beckons and the lies pile up, their friendship is put to the test.



© Sony Music Entertainment

#### EPIC: ELVIS PRESLEY IN CONCERT

##### European Premiere

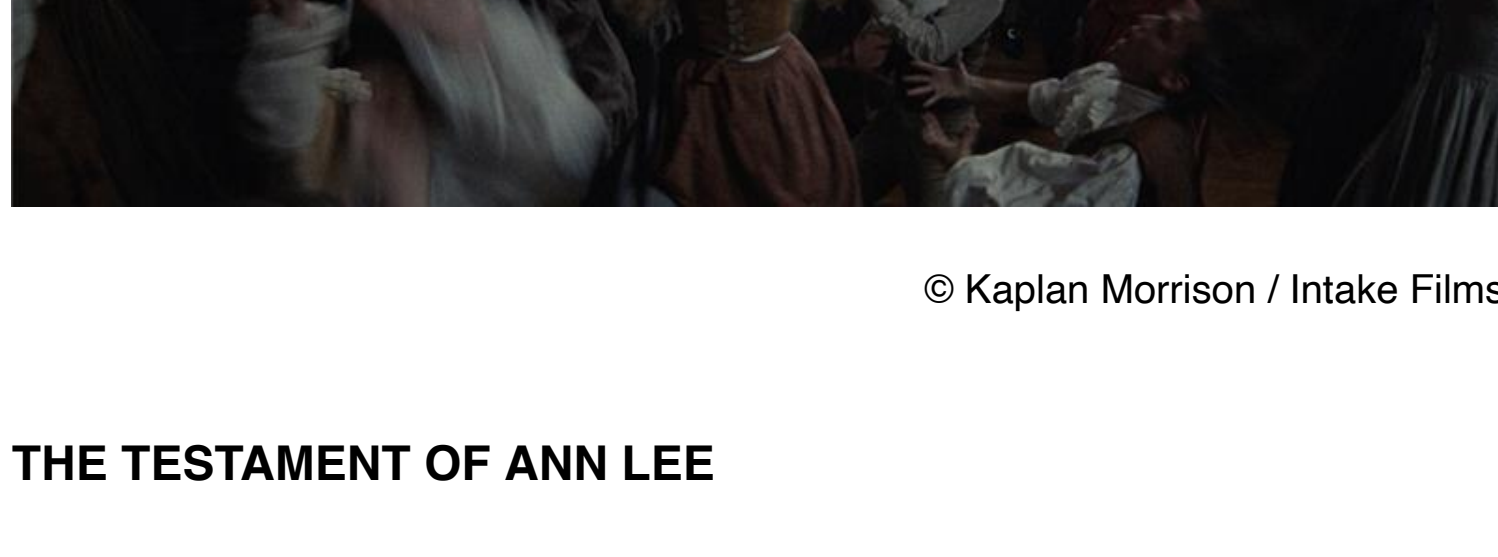
Documentary, Concert film

Australia, 2025

**Director:** Baz Luhrmann

**Protagonists:** Elvis Presley

Elvis sings and tells his story like never before in a new cinematic experience from visionary filmmaker Baz Luhrmann.



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#### THE TESTAMENT OF ANN LEE

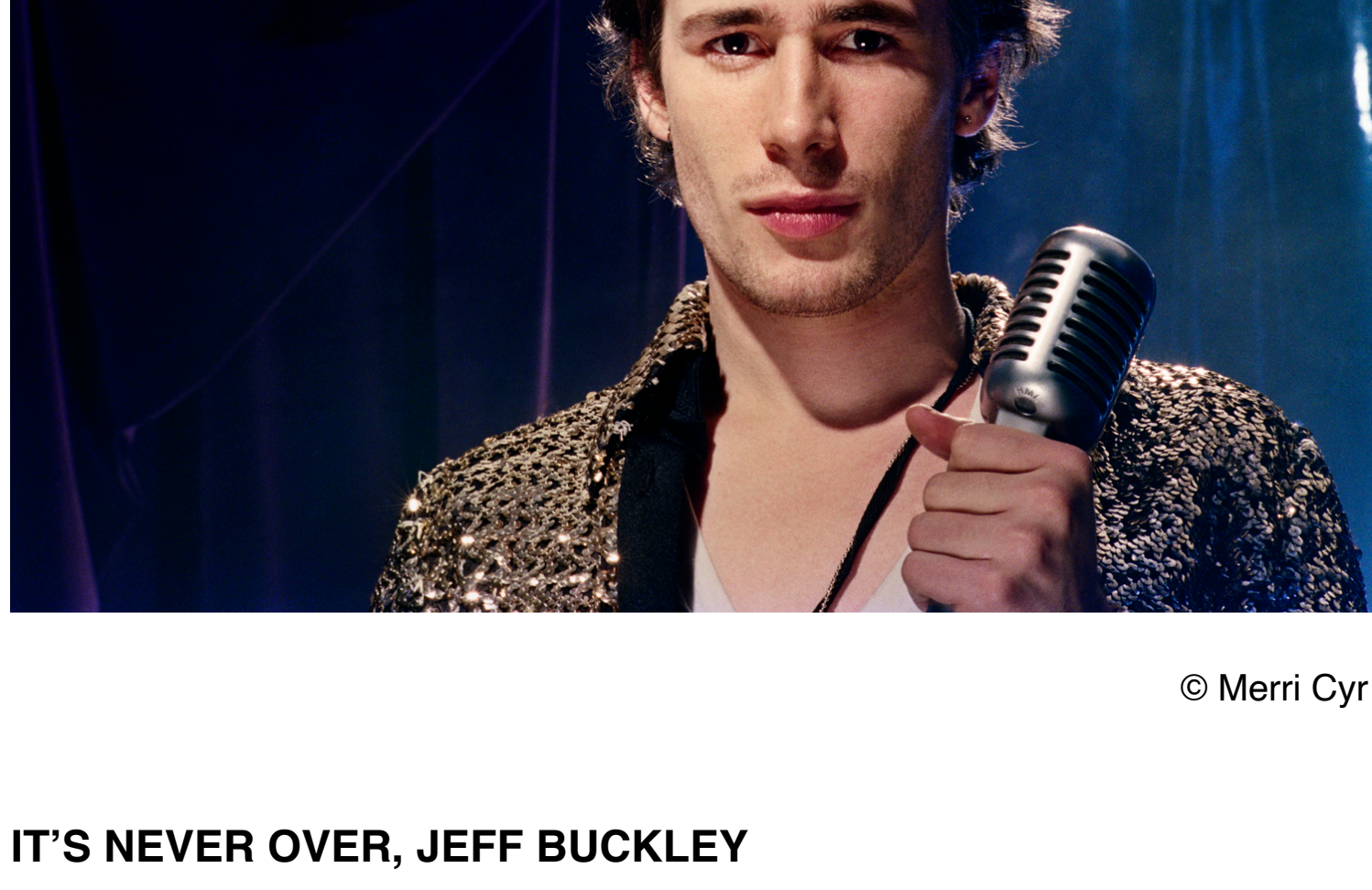
Historical Musical

UK, 2025

**Director:** Mona Fastvold

**Cast:** Amanda Seyfried, Thomasin McKenzie, Lewis Pullman, Tim Blake Nelson, Christopher Abbott

An epic fable inspired by the life of Ann Lee, the founder of the Shakers, a radical religious movement that began in the late 1700s.



© Merri Cyr

#### IT'S NEVER OVER, JEFF BUCKLEY

Documentary

USA, 2025

**Director:** Amy Berg

**Protagonists:** Jeff Buckley, Mary Guibert, Rebecca Moore, Joan Wasser, Michael Tighe, Parker Kindred, Ben Harper, Aimee Mann

IT'S NEVER OVER: JEFF BUCKLEY, directed by Oscar-nominated filmmaker Amy Berg (DELIVER US FROM EVIL, JANIS: LITTLE GIRL BLUE, WEST OF MEMPHIS), covers the life of the rising young star with an otherworldly voice and boundary-pushing artistry, who left the '90s music world reeling when he died suddenly, at age 30, after the release of his critically acclaimed debut album «Grace». Told through never-before-seen footage from Buckley's archives and intimate accounts from his mother Mary Guibert, former partners Rebecca Moore and Joan Wasser, Jeff's former bandmates, including Michael Tighe and Parker Kindred, and luminaries like Ben Harper and Aimee Mann, IT'S NEVER OVER, JEFF BUCKLEY illuminates one of modern music's most influential and enigmatic figures.



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#### MELODIE

##### World Premiere

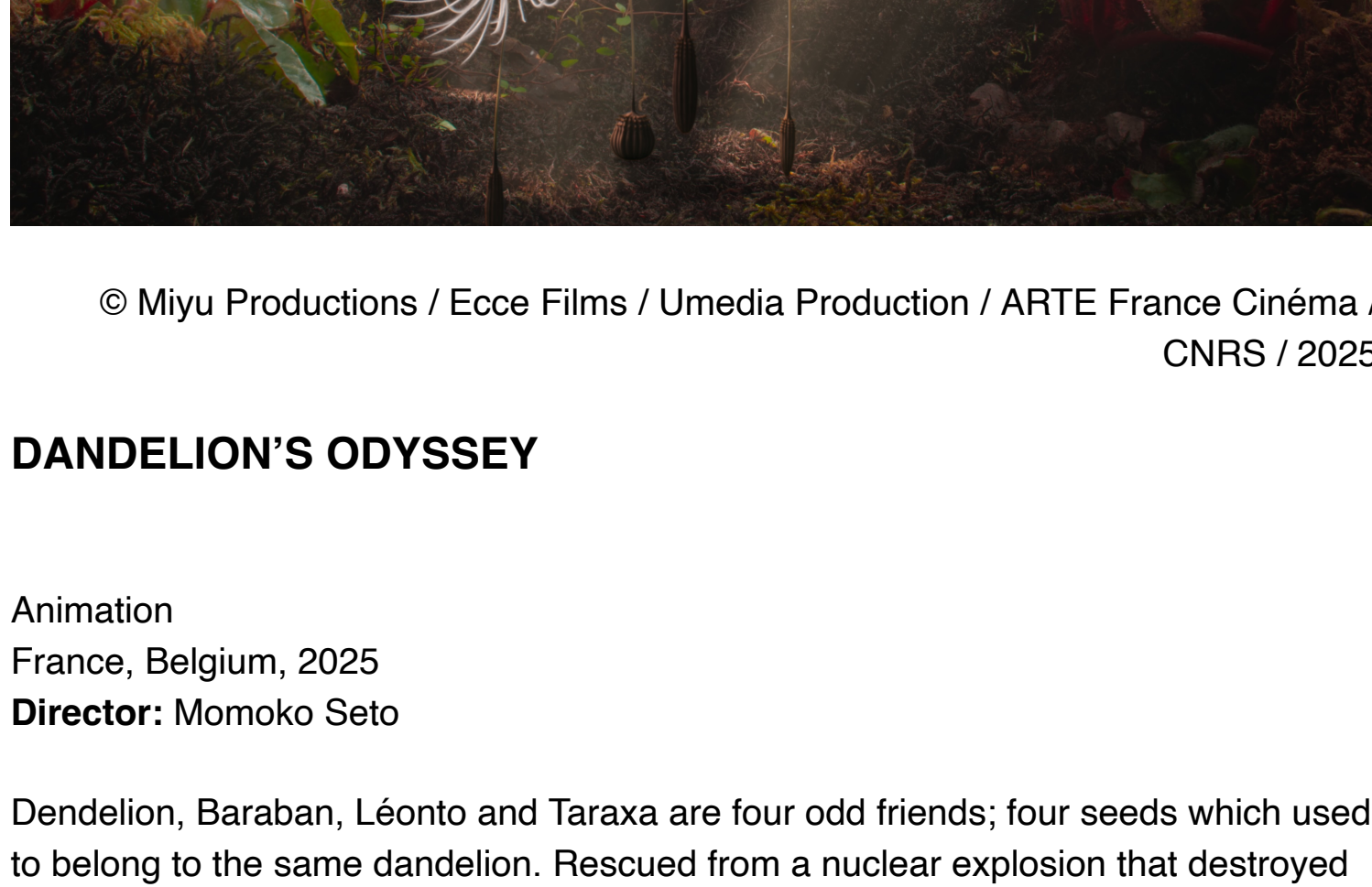
Documentary

Switzerland, 2025

**Director:** Anka Schmid

**Protagonists:** Joana Kora, Heather Edwards, Mina Inauen, Karl Reinhart, John Bayly, Pota Siderakis

A lyrical documentary that explores the emotional power of singing and its ability to connect us across all ages, cultures and life experiences. Whether alone or in community, singing offers strength, joy and comfort. It stirs our memory and touches our souls. From a Kurdish refugee family to a Swiss woman living with the Alpine Blessing, from premature babies on a hospital ward to people living with dementia the film reveals how singing nurtures well-being and trust. Collective singing calls for deep listening and mutual attunement – heard in the voices of the sisters of a historic convent, echoed in traditional male vocal ensembles, carried through football stadiums, and rising in the resounding protest chants of women's marches.



© Miyu Productions / Ecce Films / Umedia Production / ARTE France Cinéma / CNRS / 2025

#### DANDELION'S ODYSSEY

Animation

France, Belgium, 2025

**Director:** Momoko Seto

Dandelion, Baraban, Léonto and Taraxa are four odd friends; four seeds which used to belong to the same dandelion. Rescued from a nuclear explosion that destroyed the Earth, they find themselves hurled into the cosmos, travelling through planets and constellations. When they land on an unknown land, they set off on an unforgettable adventure to find a new home and settle for good.

#### Zürich Film Festival

The Zurich Film Festival (ZFF) is the second largest festival in the German-speaking world. Over 11 days in autumn, it presents the greatest discoveries and the year's most anticipated movies. The ZFF promotes exchange between upcoming directors, established filmmakers, the film industry and the general public. In the last 20 years, the festival has attracted a total of 1.35 million visitors. 500 of the 2,300 films screened celebrated their world or European premiere at the Zurich Film Festival.

**The 21st edition will take place from 25 September to 5 October 2025.**

**Further Information:** [Zurich Film Festival](#) | [ZFF Industry](#)

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